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ABSTRACT

Both educators and the public are becoming increasingly alarmed by the magnitude of school discipline problems. Surveys of secondary schools reveal increasing incidences of rioting, arson, violence, and property damage. The increase of discipline problems has been linked to the influence of college disruptions, violence on television, the civil rights movement, the increase of violence in the larger society, and the rise of participatory democracy. Educators, by decreasing the amount of time devoted to learning, are partially responsible for discipline problems. Some researchers have blamed the abdication of authority by parents. Reduced school discipline will have adverse effects on students' academic achievement, emotional development, and social attitudes. A continuum of solutions has been suggested, stretching from liberal to conservative. The liberal emphasis on the use of psychology is appropriate for psychotic and neurotic problem students, and the conservative law enforcement approach is probably best for removing criminally disruptive students. Yet for most discipline problems other approaches must be used. The need for behavioral and intellectual standards and structures must be realized. The position of the educator must again be preeminent. Discipline in best approached through a thorough affirmation that learning is the central purpose of the schools. (Author/JM)

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DISCIPLINE, DISRUPTION, AND THE AMERICAN SCHOOL: A FUNDAMENTAL CONCERN

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In recent years, a number of formidable problems have confronted American education. Declining scores on standardized examinations have raised concern for the quality of curricula. An increasing incidence of drug use among student populations has assumed alarming proportions. Financial issues have threatened to undermine the support of public and private schools. Each of these problems continues to draw the attention of parents, teachers, and administrators. Each has been the object of various corrective measures.

Yet, important as they may seem, these issues do not constitute what the public and many educators believe to be the major concern now facing American education. That issue, the lack of discipline in schools, is often conveniently ignored during abstract discussions of the philosophy or the sociology of the learning process.

From one perspective, it is difficult to believe that discipline can be the major issue confronting schools today. The advance of technology and the outpouring of research concerning numerous aspects of education seem to have placed learning above the level of those bestial human instincts. The general sophistication of Western society may appear to have outgrown the impulses to disorder which have plagued earlier times and cultures.

The magnitude of the discipline problem is inescapable, however. In a 1978 Gallup poll of public attitudes toward education, lack of discipline was the overwhelming choice as the biggest problem confronting public schools. Next to discipline, the public saw three concerns: the use of drugs by students, the lack of financial support for education, and the integration of schools, as significant problems. Yet the number questioned which saw discipline as significant was double that which named each of these factors. Parents of school children, as well as adults without children in school, all viewed the discipline issue as extremely important.[1]

Although it is striking, the importance attached to the discipline issue in the 1978 survey is hardly novel. Only once during the ten years since the Gallup surveys of public

attitudes toward education were initiated has discipline failed to receive more mention than any other problem.[2]

It should not be assumed that the public is alone in its concern for school discipline. Public school teachers and administrators have also voiced alarm at the problem. One teacher wrote:

> "...I conclude that the most of the students have no respect for any person or thing --not even for themselves... Children defy teachers openly and loudly with the most obscene of the obscenities, with taunts and their own cruel kind of put-downs, and with physical assaults. Whatever was not nailed down has been stolen, schools have been vandalized, records have been destroyed."[3]

Dimensions of the Problem

While surveys and individual opinions such as those cited above call attention to the magnitude of the discipline problem, research has delineated the extent of this situation. Since the closing years of the 1960's, various investigators have attempted to quantify the limits of school disruption. Early in 1969, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, after surveying conditions in more than 1,000 high schools, reported that 59 percent of the high schools and 56 percent of the junior high schools contacted had experienced some form of student protest.[4] A short time later, the Center for Research and Education in American Liberties at Columbia University concluded that 348 high schools in 38 states had undergone some form of disruption in the period between November 1968 and February 1969. Westin added that 239 of the schools surveyed had suffered episodes of 'serious' proportions.[5]

The most comprehensive study of student disruption carried out during the 1960's was implemented by the House Subcommittee on General Education during the year 1968-69. The Subcommittee sent a questionnaire concerning disruption in education to all of the Nation's 29,000 public, private, and parochial high schools. In compiling the results of

its survey, the Congressional subcommittee defined disruption as specific activities such as strikes, boycotts, sit-ins, rioting, and arson. Tabulation of replies to the study demonstrated that 18% of the schools responding had experienced 'serious protests'. Major issues of these protests included disciplinary rules, dress codes, school services, and curriculum policies.[6]

Another major survey followed the Congressional investigation. This analysis, implemented by the Syracuse University Research Corporation, focused on disruption in urban, public secondary schools. Returns from the study showed that 85 percent of the schools responding had experienced some type of problem in the period between 1967 and 1970. Particularly striking was the incidence of serious offenses among those problems identified. A full 11% of the public, urban secondary schools which responded reported experiencing rioting; 31% noted that arson had occurred; 29% reported student-teacher physical confrontation; 56% confirmed the existence of substantial property damage other than arson.[7]

The volume of research concerning disruption in the schools has lessened during the 1970's; yet, investigations which have occurred demonstrate that the problem has not abated. Reports from the National Association of School Security Directors indicate that during the period between 1970 and 1973, the incidence of various categories of crime committed in schools increased at rates ranging from 58% to 117%. Statistics compiled by the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency for the Three Year Period ending in 1973 revealed that the following increases in specific categories occurred:

Weapon confiscations, 54%

Assaults on students, 85%

Assaults on teachers, 77%

Robberies, 37%

Rapes and attempted rapes, 41%

Homicides, 18%[8]

As the decade of the 1970's closed, the wave of disruption plaguing primary and secondary education showed no sign of abating. The most recent studies indicate that general disruption has become commonplace in many schools while actual violence is undergoing a marked increase.[9] These conclusions confirm disruption is a wide-ranging phenomenon in the schools. They also support the popular notion, registered in the Gallup Poll, that discipline is the greatest challenge currently facing American education.

Sources of Disruption

Once the dimensions of the discipline problem are appreciated, attempts to understand the issue logically turn to identification of sources of the current situation. Here there is no shortage of information. A wide range of citizens, educators, and experts of all types have drawn a myriad of conclusions on this subject.

From an historical standpoint, it seems natural to link the disruption in secondary education which has marked the present decade to the difficulties which plagued higher education during the 1960's. Research seems to demonstrate that disciplinary problems in American high schools underwent a marked increase during the last years of the 1960's, after the great wave of protest had swept the Nation's campuses. While direct evidence for a university-high school, cause-effect relationship is lacking, the possibility that events on the campus influenced events in the secondary school seems logical. Just as higher education has traditionally set intellectual, curricular, and social trends for the rest of American's educational establishment, it seems that the colleges may have set a standard of disruption for all American's schools.[10]

While campus disruption doubtlessly exerted an influence on the disciplinary situation in the public schools, it cannot account for the totality of the problem. Just as Vietnam cannot account for the entire course of campus protest, the college situation cannot have fostered and sustained the whole spectrum of disruption at the secondary level. From the universities, the search for causes must proceed to other arenas.

A number of theories concerning school disruption, like the campus protest approach, have emphasized the influence of societal conditions on events in the schools. Among these viewpoints are those which accent the impact of the Civil Rights movement and the push for racial equality on the schools. It should be remembered that, from its beginnings during the 1950's, the American civil rights movement was directed at the public schools. The landmark judicial decision of the first decade of the movement was directed against the practices of the Topeka, Kansas Board of Education.

Various writers have noted that the implications of the general assault of such black leaders as Dr. Martin Luther King on the white educational system, cannot have been lost on school children, both black and white. Researchers who conducted the 1970 Syracuse University study of urban high schools were told by many students that existing rules and policies were wrong and that pupils had a right to change them.[11]

Beyond the actual drive for ethnic rights, the rise of racial pride which occurred during the 1950's and 60's also appears to have contributed to a weakening of traditional structures of educational discipline. The explosion of ethnic pride among such groups as American Indians, Blacks, and Chicanos was long delayed. When this surge finally hit the adolescent world, it produced a revolution in the style, language, and interpersonal relationships of a whole generation. Under these conditions, it was perhaps inevitable that conflict and tension should occur in the schools. Educational institutions, along with parents, are the certifiers of right and wrong for the young. The youth of many ethnic groups grew tired of what they viewed as governance by teacher-administrator fiat. The authority of public schools was further eroded by the fact that many public schools were directly responsible to local voters for authority and money, and many of these voters were intimidated by ethnic pride and protests.

A considerable body of evidence supports the role of the civil rights, and race-related concerns in educational disciplinary problems. The 1968-69 study conducted by the House Subcommittee on General Education found that race was a factor in more than 50 percent of the protests in schools with more than 1000 students and in 30 percent of the smaller schools.[12]

At the same time, however it has also become clear that the tendency of the civil rights and ethnic movements to oppose traditional patterns of authority cannot account for the range of disciplinary problems currently being experienced. Vandalism and violence have been as prevalent in predominantly black schools, staffed with black teachers and administrators, as they have been in largely black schools staffed with white teachers and administrators. The alternating increases and decreases on public and judicial interest in integration which have marked the past decade have not been paralleled by similar trends in the incidence of school violence.

If the causes of disruption in American schools lie beyond social and racial protests, perhaps they lie in other factors which have become common features on the national landscape. The role of violence in the larger society as an influence on violence in the schools has received considerable attention in recent years. Researchers have noted that each day, physical confrontations between humans are in the news. In one sense, this pattern includes both campus and racial protest, as well as other, recent events. Thus, a common strain of violence connected the college protests and the urban riots of the 1960's with the Vietnam War and the incidence of crime in American cities.

A number of authorities on disruption in the schools have also drawn attention to the impact of television violence on children. They claim that while the incidence of violence may not have changed, the widespread portrayal of this phenomenon may have induced young people to adopt more aggressive forms of behavior. Educators and sociologists have been quick to relate the trend toward greater violence in the media to a rise in classroom violence.[13]

While interest in violence has focused on one specific aspect of disruption in the schools, attention to what has been called a rise in participatory democracy has led to speculation concerning a full range of situations. Various authorities have concluded that the increased emphasis on public participation in government which has marked recent years may be exerting an impact on the governance of education in the classroom. They

argue that the forces of democracy which have widened opportunities for participation in the development of policy may be bringing about a veritable revolution in the schools, by leveling student-teacher and student-administrator relationships. While in some cases, this drive for participation has taken the violent form, in most cases it has placed subtle pressures on traditional systems of authority. Changes in the apparel of young people have thus undermined dress codes, while the rising use of drugs among students have countered prohibitions against experimentation with such substances.[14]

Other societal trends have also been linked to increased disruption and weakened discipline in the schools. The influence of television on children has been blamed for the erosion of teacher authority and discipline.[15] Rebellion against educational discipline has also been attributed to frustrations produced by problems within the American family. It has been noted, for example, that the rising American divorce rate has undermined authority at home and encouraged attacks on classroom authority.[16] The specific influence of drug use has drawn the attention of Congressional investigators. One Senate subcommittee concluded that the use of drugs and school vandalism go hand-in-hand.[17]

The civil rights movement, the incidence of violence in the society, the rise of participatory democracy, are only a few of a number of factors cited for all or part of the current difficulties with school discipline. Each of these is no doubt connected with some particular aspect of the problem. Yet none of them seems to account for the dimensions of the current pattern of disruption in education. Campus disruption has waxed and faded, but the problem in secondary schools shows no sign of abating. Neither can the patterns of interest in civil rights account for the upward crescendo of school disruption. Violence exists in American society, yet it has always existed. It might be questioned whether television violence of the 1960's and 70's is any more pronounced than the television and 'war movie' motion picture violence of the 1940's and 50's. Participatory democracy may have had its effect, yet contemporary Americans seem more possessed with a lack of power, than with a sense of control of their government. Television, families, and drugs

have also been blamed, but the nature of the connection between each of these factors and student behavior is highly controversial.[18]

If each of these factors is insufficient to explain the general incidence of disruption in schools, it might be questioned whether any influence may explain the general scope and direction of the present situation. Perhaps the level of disruption which has plagued education during recent years is not a general problem but a coincidental combination of specific difficulties fostered by specific causes.

Analysis of the strength and magnitude of the present problem, however, suggests that it cannot be the product of a number of isolated, peripheral factors. It would be too much to expect such a combination of factors to sustain a condition of disruption such as that which now exists at a uniformly high level. Random influences do not produce a significant pattern of mass behavior and sustain its existence over a prolonged period.

The duration and pervasiveness of the present disruption in American education suggest an influence which touches all segments of American life. The existence of discipline problems in areas without racial problems and in schools where violence has not occurred suggests that a more basic cause exists. Because the incidence of disruption has become so general, that cause must involve the most fundamental components of any school community: students, educators, and parents. Only through difficulties at this personal level could problems of the magnitude now being experienced arise. Consideration of developments in this area highlights a number of interesting patterns.

There seems little reason to doubt that educators may be personally responsible for much of the discipline problem. It is no secret that numbers of hours devoted to instruction have declined during recent years. Factors which have contributed to this pattern, including shorter working hours for teachers, the increased use of audio-visual materials, and the developments of independent study approaches may be discussed ad infinitum. Whatever their precise causes, however, these reductions in the amount of time devoted to instruction have decreased the amount of time devoted to learning and encouraged the growth of non or partially structured activities in schools.

This should not imply that all teaching need be of the hard nosed, lecture variety. Students need practice activities and mental exercises to digest materials learned. In recent years, however, the homework and out of class assignments which once fulfilled this function has often been replaced by in-class movies, slides, and discussions.[19]

Unfortunately, many educators have been slow to grasp the reality and the seriousness of this situation. It is all too easy, writes one authority, to blame TV violence or the laxity of dress codes in the schools.[20] Human inertia has often discouraged efforts at improving conditions. It has been far easier to lay materials before students and hope they absorb it than to engage in aggressive, instruction. The ethical relativism which emerged from the 1960's has also contributed to the problem. American society has always valued diversity. Yet, 'doing one's own thing', without regard to quality of performance has been carried to extremes.

Much of the foregoing has concerned the relationship of the teaching profession to the discipline problem. This should not imply, however, that educational administrators do not share responsibility for conditions. Like teachers, principals and superintendents have been slow to apply the firmness which focuses student attention on materials to be learned. Like teachers, they have opted for the comfort of popularity with students and shunned the coolness which sometimes accompanies rigorous application of standards. "Rapping' with students has replaced the suspension process in many areas. The exhilaration which emerges from social interaction has supplanted the pride of individual accomplishment.[21]

The tragic proportions of this situation are obvious. As the primary classroom emphasis shifts from learning to gratification, the means of attaining this goal shifts from study and inquiry to aggression and disruption.

It would be erroneous, however, to suggest that educators alone are responsible for the personal dimension of the present discipline problem. A number of researchers have pointed to the impact of abdication of authority by parents on the behavior of today's

young people. Many of the same factors which influenced educators, such as inertia and the reluctance to prevent youth from 'doing its own thing' have also influenced parents.[22] One writer has suggested that parental permissiveness arises from a lack of personal nerve. In the last analysis, it is noted, many parents take the easy route and allow children to do as they please, rather than devote energy to extended supervision or risk the emotional trials of confrontation.[23]

Permissiveness in the home touches large segments of the American population. It not only weakens or eliminates the beneficial guidance of parents, but clears the way for such pernicious influences as alcohol, drugs, and television violence. It should be remembered that children spend most of their pre-school years and much of their time outside school hours in the home. The patterns of behavior developed in this environment will inevitably affect conduct in the classroom.[24]

Beyond its direct impact in building patterns of student conduct, permissiveness in the home indirectly undermines discipline in the classroom. The Council for Basic Education reports that, in many metopolitan areas, teachers have nearly lost control because they know that discipline will not be backed up by parents. The Council notes that the difficulty is as prevalent in the suburbs as it is in the ghetto: "the defiance of authority may be more sedate, but the problem is there all the same."[25]

Thus, at the student-educator, as well as at the child-parent level, a general pattern of permissiveness seems to have arisen in American society. As authorities have pointed out, this development transcends race, television, and socio-economic levels. Its pervasiveness helps to explain why the discipline problem has consistently upstaged the effects of alcohol and drugs, as well as declining tests scores, in the public mind. In many respects, this pattern helps explain the influence of other sociological factors on student disruption. A lack of adult guidance has left young peple to erroneously deduce that struggle against unjust authority legitimizes struggle against all authority. Adult unwillingness to spend time with children has pushed television and drugs into the places

once occupied by mothers and fathers. A general adult reluctance to recognize the seriousness of the problem has only compounded its effects.

The possibility that a general cause lies at the origin of the trend toward disruption in education does little to simplify the situation. Indeed, it suggests that the condition is rooted in the families and classroom relationships which form the basis of the American educational system.

The Implications of Reduced Discipline for the Schools

Examination of the extent and the sources of disruption in education makes for interesting analysis. Yet, unless such activities are tied to the future of American schools, they become mere academic exericses. Only through a survey of the implications of present trends can approaches to the problem be formulated.

It should be obvious at this juncture, that reduced discipline in the schools will result in more than unruly classrooms. Academic achievement, emotional development, and social attitudes of youth can all be affected by this situation.

Most serious of all may be the impact of disruption on the academic mission of education. The detrimental effect of campus disruption on learning during the 1960's immediately calls up images of student strikes and university closings, yet discipline at the secondary level may be less visible. As authorities have noted, the disruption which occurs in the high school may take varied forms, ranging from or lack of participation in classroom activities to the triggering of fire alarms and vandalism. While disruption at the secondary level may be less organized, its impact on learning is nonetheless destructive. Lack of discipline in the classroom further restricts opportunities for learning. It diverts attention from the central activity of schools and promotes the notion that aggressiveness, rather than knowledge and truth are the foci of education and life.

The implications of reduced discipline for learning in the classroom are profound for Western civilization, as well as for Western education. Richard L. Hopkins cautions that

freedom in the classroom does not mean that a child has the right to interfere with another's right to learn.[26] Nancy Wyner notes that an essential to democracy is self discipline. Without this structure, she argues, no person has rights.[27]

The implications of disruption in education for student emotional development are also considerable. Teachers, administrators, and parents who believe they are helping children by allowing them to act out their every wish, are satisfying personal desires, rather than the needs of students. Although patterns of disruptive behavior may be encouraged by a lack of discipline at the childhood level, they will not be countenanced by law enforcement agencies and other institutions at the adult level. Acceptance and encouragement of such behavior in the schools will only plant the seeds of later emotional difficulty. Individual coping mechanisms are a necessary accouterment of a mass society. Such mechanisms are developed through the framework of the educational process.[28]

The present lack of school discipline also bears important societal implications. Richard Hopkins points out that when children are allowed to demand the satisfaction of every whim, freedom degenerates into license. Typical examples of such license, he notes, include allowing children to destroy materials which belong to others and allowing them to demand the attention of an adult, no matter how tired or preoccupied the adult might be.[29] Unlike totalitarian traditions, Western civilization, in attempting to preserve freedom, has occasionally teetered on the brink of license. Yet, the West must struggle to avoid these tendencies. In license and unrestricted freedom, all of the values of individuality and individual fulfillment are subverted to mob rule and mass anarchy.

The preceding comments suggest that discipline in education may be difficult to define and to attain. It is that elusive commodity which structures learning without directing it, which stimulates thought without dispersing it. The words of Hopkins imply that disciplined inquiry, both in academia and in the non-academic world, may be one characteristic which differentiates our way of life from those of other cultures. The application of rigor to learning without stifling the process is an attribute not found in the psuedo-scientific approaches of our Marxist neighbors.

From a number of perspectives, the present lack of discipline in education thus bears threatening implications for American schools and society in general. At the academic level, the capacity and productivity of our graduates. At the moral and societal level, it endangers that precious blend of openness and order which lies at the core of our heritage.

Responses to the Discipline Problem

The foregoing series of discussions suggests the existence and implications of a wide-ranging discipline problem which currently exists in the Nation's schools as well as in the general society. Implicit in these discussions, however, is the notion that this disease need not be fatal.

Throughout this survey of research opinion concerning the sources of student disruption, it becomes clear that the society, rather than genetics, has created the problem. If, through willful laxness, the situation has been allowed to develop, it follows that, through willful commitment to change, it might be eliminated.

Such runs the logical approach to the situation. There is also a less intellectual side of the coin. It is no exaggeration to conclude that the discipline problem must be solved. If the present crescendo of disorder is allowed to develop unabated, it will bring the activities of American education to a halt.

Once it is agreed that meaningful action against the discipline problem is possible, the character of the action becomes the issue. Various groups and individual authorities have seen a relaxation of controls as the answer to disruption. Others have argued that only stringency can stop this disturbing trend.

Among the most outspoken proponents of encouraging better behavior through liberalizing the educational process is author Charles Silberman. Silberman has concluded that American schools transmit values of 'docility, passivity, and lack of trust'. Silberman and other liberal thinkers claim that if education is freed of what they see as demeaning

rules and regulations, students will cope with and benefit from greater responsibility. They point out that "repression has failed anyway", and that "even difficult and disruptive students can respond to an atmosphere of trust".[30]

A considerable body of thought and evidence supports various facets of the liberal approach to discipline. Obviously, no one can be forced to learn if he or she refuses. Ronald Abrell points out that 'coercion is inhuman and rarely works'.[31]

Experimentation with various types of extremely disruptive children has demonstrated that trust-oriented approaches may have some efficacy. Through the use of parents and peers, numbers of deviant behavior episodes of disruptive children have been reduced.[32] Other techniques have focused on young people who, although not overly aggressive, may disrupt classroom activities by acting out inner conflicts or frustrations.[33]

While much of the interest generated by the liberal approach to school discipline has focused on specific psychological difficulties, another wing of the movement has assumed a legal bend. Proponents of this approach point out the decline of in loco parentis, the doctrine through which the school acted as a second parent, has opened the way for student responsibility. They argue that young people have employed disruption, not to create anarchy, but to secure their just rights within an orderly educational society. A prime focus of this viewpoint is the United States Supreme Court's decision in Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District and subsequent rulings which held that "neither the constitution nor the Bill of Rights is for adults alone."[34]

One believer in the efficacy of student responsibility, Charles Harrison, points out that recent patterns of disruption, in the long term, may be channeled into positive and productive action. He sees the activism and aggressive behavior of young people as a force with enormous potential for American education.[35] The biggest question surrounding the student rights approach seems to center on the extent to which students, as novices, have a right to shape the curricula which they are only beginning to explore.[36]

The psychological and the legal wing of the liberal approach to disruption in American schools share the conviction that drastic changes in approaches to students are necessitated by present conditions. Both view the present pattern of disruption as evidence that traditional approaches have failed.

While liberal thinkers have searched for new perspectives concerning school discipline, what might be called the conservative approach to the situation affirms that the problem can be resolved through traditional approaches. Like the liberal viewpoint, the conservative position has assumed varying forms which relate to specific aspects of the problem.

In its most extreme form, that which lies directly opposite the opinions of Silberman on the philosophical spectrum, the traditional position becomes one of law enforcement. Particularly in response to school vandalism, an increasing body of research has focused on use of behavioral science and modern technology to bring about apprehension and punishment of offenders. For a number of reasons, this reaction to the discipline situation was probably inevitable. Damage to educational property is becoming so widespread that its costs alone justify the use of sophisticated techniques to stop its spread. Increased interest in laws which extend full adult penalties to youthful offenders also reflects the public's orientation toward disruption and destruction of property.[37]

Other approaches to support of traditional means of disciplines have altered the forms, without changing the purpose, of school regulations. Various school districts, for example, have experimented with student security forces, the use of young people to supervise the implementation and enforcement of standards of conduct within classrooms and school buildings. In most cases, such systems have not been adequately tested. A number of high schools in the Detroit area, however, have reported that youthful supervisors are more effective than their older counterparts.[38]

Beyond actual law enforcement units, procedures such as corporal punishment and suspension of disruptive students have received considerable attention during recent

years. The issue of corporal punishment has often become controversial. Few authorities are enthusiastic about the practice. Published comments on the subject are generally negative. Proponets of the practice agree that it may be distasteful, yet point out that, as a last resort, it may be one of the few effective tools for limiting the incidence of disruption. Unfortunately, no adequate studies of the effects of the practice have yet been produced.[39]

A wide range of viewpoints defines the public and professional view of suspensions and expulsions. Proponents of this practice argue that removing a student from school underlines the seriousness of the discipline problem; that it offers an hiatus during which the youngster may learn more appropriate conduct; that it instructs other students concerning proper conduct; and that it preserves students interested in learning from the actions of disruptive individuals. Opponents of the practice claim that it creates more problems than it solves. They note that suspension has been used to harass and intimidate students; that, by causing students to miss school it harms their academic records; and that it is a confession of desperation on the part of school administrators.[40]

Many school administrators also oppose the practice, yet confess that, in the present situation, few alternatives remain. They point out that, in a permissive society where letters and report cards fail to provoke attention at home, it is often the only effective tool for gaining the attention of parents. Until such time as a more effective mechanism is devised, they note, suspension serves an instructive and corrective function.

It should be noted that efforts have been made to design alternatives to traditional suspensions. Some of these, including the assignment of teachers or counselors to problem children, can require additional staff time. Others, such as in school suspension, change the environment of the process. In the use of these techniques, the benefits to be gained must be weighed against the costs involved. Often, the innovation is no more effective than the traditional process.[41]

Law enforcement, corporal punishment, and suspension address specific aspects of the discipline problem. Each of these practices meets the specific, and usually the more extreme needs, for dealing with disruption.

At the same time, however, more general conservative approaches to the situation have also been devised. One principal reports that generating endless series of regulations only confuses students. He notes that the 'sit down-shut up model' has its advantages. Rules are enforced in a hard and fast manner. Achievement scores go up because the disrupters are gone. Absentee rates also diminish, because the chronically absent and suspended individuals are also gone.[42]

Increasingly, a revulsion against the products of permissiveness seems to be supporting the conservative approach to discipline. In many areas, an emphasis on traditional academic achievement seems to be replacing the 'do-your-own-thing mentality'.[43] Recent studies indicate that students seem to be opting for difficult, structured course offerings.[44]

Both the liberal and the conservative approaches to student discipline contain various insights. From its own perspective, each addresses a considerable portion of the problem of disruption currently facing American education. Yet, from any consideration of such viewpoints, the question inevitably arises; which side is right? Certainly a series of opposing viewpoints cannot all be correct.

The truth of the latter statement is self-evident. At the same time, however, it seems clear that the problem of disruption in American education is so complex that no one strategy will meet all of its aspects.

Obviously, certain segments of the disruptive population require special approaches. The liberal emphasis on the use of psychology is doubtlessly appropriate for those psychotic and severe neurotic cases which are in need of rehabilitation. By the same token, law enforcement is probably the best means for removing criminally disruptive elements from American schools and placing them in the penal system, where they belong.

Once the psychologically and criminally deviant minorities are removed from the classroom, what remains is the bulk of discipline cases, those daily problems which are progressively strangling American education. Approaches to these situations must be carefully formulated. Their success or failure will have an important bearing on the productivity of all of American education.

A few guidelines for effective discipline seem to offer promise for the 1980's and beyond. Above all, the compatibility of structure and standards with learning must be recognized. It must be realized that absence of behavioral and intellectual standards go hand-in-hand, and that the absence of both can only produce chaos. Free-form learning may have its values, yet the uncritical, do-your-own thing approach of the 1960's is probably as responsible as any factor for the present disciplinary mess.[45] It is no coincidence that the areas of knowledge which make up our curricula are known as disciplines. Orderly procedures, at the intellectual as well as at the behavioral level, are crucial to the pursuit of knowledge.[46]

Once the need for structure in the classroom is recognized, the forms of that structure may be defined. Clearly, the teacher, the student, and the administrator all have responsibilities. It is apparent, however, that these responsibilities are not identical. Just as members of society have differing functions, so do members of the educational component of society. It would be foolish to assume that school is a free market of ideas where educators and students simply share common knowledge.

In the classroom, the position of the educator is preeminent. This position confers important rights necessary for the dispersion and development of knowledge, yet it also entails major responsibilities. One authority points out that "a teacher has gone too far when he concentrates on his interests and problems rather than helping students with their interests and problems.[47]

By the same token, the position of the student in the classroom is subordinate. This status is ironic, since the student is the focus of the learning process. Yet, classroom

learning cannot occur without reference to other individuals and entities. In this case, the student must focus his or her attention on learning in order to allow the activity of the teacher or fellow students to have their impact. An orderly classroom cannot guarantee learning, yet a disruptive one will almost certainly prevent it. Disciplinary problems deny all members of the classroom environment the opportunity to obtain an education.[48]

The educational administrator also bears an important relationship with the learning situation. As an executive officer of the peoples' representatives, this individual is responsible for protecting the community's learning environment. This responsibility gives the administrator the power to remove or to install individuals in the classroom. It is vitally important that this power be employed, or remain unused, not in response to political power, but when the needs of the situation dictate. The principal or superintendent who shrinks from suspension when the numbers of offenders become too large has surrendered to the will of the mob.[49]

Concern with discipline need not lead to the assumption that learning is being depersonalized or that students are being treated in an unemotional manner. Indeed, because discipline is in the interest of both the individual and the wider society, it is caring.[50] The sooner we realize this, and unabashedly begin an early intervention approach to the problem, the better off we will be.[51]

Beyond individual roles and other concerns, however, the focus of all guidelines relating to school discipline properly reside on the curriculum. Because learning is the focus of all educational activities, the final criterion of all disciplinary processes lie in their connection with the learning process. The compatibility of structure and learning has already been addressed, yet the impetus for this relationship goes beyond advisability to necessity. Freedom, learning, and discipline are related concepts.[52] Without discipline, learning degenerates into license and the progress of the individual, as well as that of the civilization, regresses.

Clearly the discipline problem is best dealt with through a focus on the learning process. Only through affirmation of this central purpose of American schools will parents, children, and educators find the insight to deal with the present situation, and the strength to master it.

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